# NIGHTFLYERS

by

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Based on the Novella

by

George R. R. Martin

FADE IN:

INT. AVALON SPACEPORT TERMINAL; CONCOURSE - NIGHT

We are moving rapidly down a narrow, dimly lit tunnel in a silent, bubble-topped shuttle vehicle. There is no driver.

Seated in the left front seat is MIRANDA DORLAC, an extraordinarily beautiful, athletically-built young woman wearing a yellow flight suit. Patches identify her as a member of the "Volcryn Expedition" from Avalon University.

To Miranda's right is VLADIMIR D'BRANIN, the expedition leader. A tall, gaunt man in his early forties, D'Branin is typing rapidly into a portable computer.

Miranda glances behind her where we see AUDREY ZALE, LILLY KENT, DARRYL FONTAINE, and OWL KEELOR, all of them wearing Volcryn Expedition flight suits. Audrey is an intense-looking brunette in her late 20's. Lilly is a pudgy 30 year old brunette, Darryl is a compact, slightly effeminate man in his late 30's. Owl is a good-looking former jock, who looks ten years older than his 27 years.

Miranda looks back at D'Branin and smiles, seeing he's still typing into his computer at a furious pace.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER DISPLAY - The screen shows a projected flight path for a ship called "The Nightflyer", headed for a rendezvous with a something called the Volcryn, represented by a blinking yellow symbol. At the bottom of the screen the time and date are displayed:

4:46 A.M. 6/26/2087 Avalon University

A bell tone is heard and the shuttle pulls to a rapid stop. It turns to the right, then rises upwards. Light begins shining down through the tinted glass bubble.

INT. HANGAR (MINIATURE) - NIGHT

The shuttle can be seen rising up from the tunnel into an enormous hangar.

INT. SHUTTLE; (IN HANGAR) - NIGHT

Each of the team members react strongly to the sight that awaits them there.

THEIR POV: (THROUGH SHUTTLE WINDOW) - "THE NIGHTFLYER" is a a ochre-colored cargo vessel, with three spherical holds and muscular, backswept wings that give it the appearance of some kind of prehistoric beast. The ship is beautiful, in the way certain spiders are beautiful.

Great clouds of steam issue from it's tail section. Its engines generate a powerful, throbbing noise, as if an alien factory were operating deep within its bowels.

INT. SHUTTLE - NIGHT

The glass bubble rises with a soft hiss. D'Branin hurriedly puts his computer into his flight bag and gets out, as do the others. Owl takes a flask from his flight suit and knocks back a quick drink before joining them.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The shuttle's bubble top closes and the vehicle descends back into the tunnel. The team walk closer to the Nightflyer.

LILLY
It's beautiful...

OWL
If you're into dinosaurs. It looks 60 years old...

MIRANDA
It's a lot older than that.

D'BRANIN
It's an excellent ship.

AUDREY
Even if it it was the only one we could afford, right?

D'Branin looks at her sharply, but he doesn't deny it. Owl whispers to Audrey:

OWL
I'd feel better if we were taking one of the University's garbage rigs than whatever the hell that is...

Miranda is standing too far away for a normal person to have heard him, but she fills in the blank:

MIRANDA
It's a Celidian 9000... One of the Quark Thrusters series.

Owl and Audrey look at her, wondering...

ANGLE ON THE NIGHTFLYER - The ship's running lights come on, revealing contours and textures that give the ship's metal skin an almost reptilian quality.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She regards the ship with respect.

They are all startled by a loud HISSING noise, as an airlock near the front of the ship slides open, and a boarding ramp is lowered to the ground.

D'Branin hesitates, looking around as if waiting for someone to arrive. He turns to Miranda.

D'BRANIN
This is where we were to meet Jon and Dr. Scott.

He checks his watch and looks in both directions. There is no sign of their approach.

MIRANDA
They may already be on the ship.

D'Branin nods. His mind is already on the expedition, and he heads for the boarding ramp, oblivious to the others.

Miranda turns back to the team, smiling encouragingly.

MIRANDA
Let's go.

ANGLE ON D'BRANIN - He mounts the ramp. Miranda follows closely behind, and then the others.

THEIR POV - The ramp leads up into the dark oval opening.

CLOSE ON THE PORTAL - At the top of the opening, we see a hidden video camera aimed downward.

INT. NIGHTFLYER; ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

In the center of the command console, a large oval-shaped monitor shows a point of view of D'Branin and the others following him up the ramp. The picture zooms in on Miranda's face until it fills the screen.

INT. NIGHTFLYER; MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

D'Branin and Miranda step inside. The rest of the crew tentatively follow them through.

THEIR POV - Like the exterior of the ship, the interior suggests a fusion between machine and animal. The dimly-lit corridor is furnished in a blend of rich-looking fabrics and rough-textured, overlapping metal plates.

There is a feeling of great age to everything, as if it were an immaculately kept exhibit in a museum.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - Miranda goes to the wall, touching the strangely textured fabric. She looks at her teammates.

ANGLE ON AUDREY - She walks over to examine a painting hanging on the wall.

INSERT: THE PAINTING - It suggests Munch's "The Scream", painted by a highly disturbed alien.

Darryl puts a hand on Audrey's shoulder and she jumps.

DARRYL
Sorry. Admiring the art work?

AUDREY
I guess that's what it is.

They walk away, not noticing that the figure in the painting moves, ever so slightly, as if it had a life of its own. D'Branin calls out:

D'BRANIN
Royd... Captain...

A soft, androgynous-sounding voice comes over the com system.

ROYD (V.O.)
I am here, Dr. D'Branin. Welcome to the Nightflyer. I apologize for not being able to greet you and your crew in a more personable fashion...

Everyone looks around for the source of this voice.

ROYD (V.O.)
...but I am presently occupied in a manner which prevents this.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She notices something up near the ceiling and we follows her gaze.

HER POV: A tiny video camera pans in their direction.

Miranda looks at D'Branin, nervously glancing at his watch.

D'BRANIN
Captain, there are two other members of our team who were to meet us here...

ROYD (V.O.)
You were the first to arrive.

ROYD (V.O.)
As we are scheduled to take off in less than an hour, there is a great deal I must attend to. I'll join you in the lounge, after takeoff.

D'BRANIN
Thank you.

He gestures for the team to follow him, down the hall toward the lounge. They look at one another, wondering what they've gotten themselves into.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - We see the team approaching the entrance to the lounge. An adjacent monitor shows a view of the hangar where we see another bubbled-topped vehicle rising up out of the hangar floor, in the same place our team arrived. Two figures emerge from the vehicle.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON JON WINDERMAN - Good-looking, in his early 20's, Jon is an unsettling mixture of wholesomeness and degeneracy.

Standing beside him is DR. ELIZA SCOTT, a very pretty, red-haired woman of about 30. She is Jon's personal physician and companion; his "psypsych."

They pick up their flight bags and we move with them, as they begins walking toward the ship.

We begin to hear a rhythmic, RUSHING noise, which continues as they approach the ship.

CLOSE ON JON - He stares at the ship then turns to Eliza, as if unwilling to trust his impressions.

CLOSE ON ELIZA - She is also studying the Nightflyer, then she turns to Jon.

JON'S POV: ELIZA - We can hear her speak, although she isn't moving her lips:

ELIZA (V.O.)
Are you getting anything off of it...?

Jon pauses, smiling a strange, fractured smile. He answers her telepathically:

JON (V.O.)
Nothing... worth mentioning.

Eliza looks worried. Jon looks over at the ship again and smiles with more assurance.

JON
Honest.

Eliza looks dubious. She walks ahead of him, stepping up on to the boarding ramp. Jon looks up at the ship for a moment, then follows her.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The room serves as the main living/dining space for the ship. Wine-colored, oddly textured fabric lining the walls and alien-styled furniture give this room a strange, medieval quality. One wall leads to the galley. The opposite wall is a giant video monitor which provides a view from the camera on the nose of the ship.

The team is seated an the oval-shaped table, making pre-flight preparations

ANGLE ON D'BRANIN - Looking extremely tense, he glances at his portable computer, then addresses the team:

D'BRANIN
According to the latest transmissions from Avalon, the Volcryn are maintaining the plotted flight path.

D'Branin turns to Miranda, who continues.

MIRANDA
We should reach the rendezvous point in eight days. Then we'll have a ten day window, during which they'll make their appearance. Hopefully.

D'Branin looks at the team as if somehow trying to convey his excitement about the expedition to them.

D'BRANIN
In spite of all our research, there is no way to anticipate what we will actually encounter when we meet...

As he is speaking, the door to the lounge opens silently behind him, revealing Jon and Eliza.

D'BRANIN (Continued)
...what remains as one of the oldest mysteries of the universe...

D'BRANIN'S POV - Everyone in the room, stares in his direction. (in actuality at Jon and Eliza.)

D'Branin realizes that the team is not looking at him. He turns around to see Jon and Eliza.

D'BRANIN (V.O.)
Thank God, they made it!...
Everything is falling into place..

CLOSE ON JON - he scans the people seated around the table.

*JON'S POV* - Time seems to nearly stop, as D'Branin rises, and walks slowly over to greet them.

D'BRANIN
I'd like all of you meet the final two members of our team. We're most fortunate to have Jon Winderman, one of the University's six certified class 10 telepaths... and Doctor Elizabeth Scott, Jon's personal physician and a class three in her own right.

Meanwhile, from John's POV we see the team and hear their thoughts; sometimes clearly and sometimes overlapping:

AUDREY (V.O.)
Oh, he's gorgeous.... But I can't stand the bitch with him... Shit! He's reading my...

OWL (V.O.)
Certified..? Or did he say, certifiable? The higher the rating, the more unstable they are...

DARRYL (V.O.)
If you're reading this, Jon... I just want you to know I think you're a wonderful human being...

LILLY (V.O.)
If we miscalculate plus or minus one half of a percentage with the Volcryn flight path, we should still be within... Why is everyone so ...?

When Jon reaches Miranda's face, there is absolute silence.

CLOSE ON JON - He starts to look away, but comes back again, as if something was wrong.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She looks at directly at Jon, her expression perfectly blank.

HER POV; CLOSE ON JON - He continues to stare at Miranda as if extremely puzzled.

HIS POV: CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She smiles ever so slightly. Although she doesn't move her lips, we can hear her whisper:

MIRANDA (V.O.)
Just a little trick I learned...

CLOSE ON JON - He smiles at her, impressed.

JON (V.O.)
I have a few of my own you might like.

CLOSE ON ELIZA - She watches and listens in on this "conversation" between Jon and Miranda.

BACK TO SCENE - Jon turns around as D'Branin finally reaches him, extending his hand at normal speed.

D'BRANIN
Jon.... Eliza... Please sit down.

Improptu greetings are exchanged around the room, as Eliza and Jon take their seats.

Royd's soft voice can be heard over the com system:

ROYD (V.O.)
Prepare for takeoff.

The room lights dim slightly. While D'Branin continues his his orientation speech to Jon and Eliza.

D'BRANIN
We've been approaching the task of establishing communication from every possible avenue.

CLOSE ON THE WALL SCREEN - It offers a view of the hangar as the door begin to slide open.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

The large oval monitor shows the lounge where D'Branin can be seen speaking to Jon and Eliza:

A silver-gloved hand picks up an intricately carved lightpen, aiming it an icon on the control panel representing a fusion generator. As the pen flashes, the icon glows a golden color. A faint rumble is heard from somewhere deep within the ship.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The chairs around the oval table automatically lower into horizontal positions as D'Branin finishes his speech:

D'BRANIN
In the end, your talents may prove to be successful where our machines fail. Only time will tell...

The team glance at one another, reacting to the oddness of taking off into deep space, in a strange ship, with a captain they have yet to see in person.

CLOSE ON THE WALL-SIZED MONITOR - It shows a spectacular view of space through the now-open hangar doors.

Smoothly, almost silently, the ship passes through the hangar, swiftly building up speed as it leaves Avalon.

EXT. AVALON SPACEPORT (MINIATURES) - NIGHT

The Nightflyer recedes into the darkness of space.

INT. NIGHTFLYER; LOUNGE - NIGHT

The sound of the Nightflyer's engines reaches a high-pitched whine and a strong vibration passes through the ship.

CLOSE ON THE WALL MONITOR - The view from space changes dramatically as we approach the speed of light: our field of vision blurs, flattening out into a lustrous, deep blue radiance.

BACK TO SCENE - The chairs rise into upright positions and the team unstrap themselves. Now that they've actually taken off, D'Branin relaxes a little. He looks around at the ship like a little kid who's gotten control of a toy store.

ROYD (V.O.)
The Nightflyer has locked into star drive. You're all free to move about the ship.

Miranda quietly asks Lilly:

MIRANDA
How long before we can switch to on-board tracking?

LILLY
As soon as we drop out of drive.

D'BRANIN
And the transmitter?

LILLY
We should be able to test it out by tomorrow afternoon.

D'BRANIN
Excellent.

He turns to Audrey who's nervously chewing on her fingernails in anticipation of his question.

D'BRANIN
And what is the projection for decoding the Volcryn disc.

AUDREY
I've run it through every known decryption algorythm. There's just no internal logic to the signals... Look, Vladimir, I got the disk less than a month ago. You can't expect miracles.

D'Branin is silent for a moment. Then he addresses Audrey slowly, carefully and with a distinct edge to his voice:

D'BRANIN
I don't expect miracles. But I expect that by the time, we drop out of drive, you will have achieved some kind of breakthrough that will enable us to begin to understand and communicate with these creatures when we meet them.

Audrey is silent, obviously not sharing his optimism. She exchanges glances with Lilly:

AUDREY
We're working on a self-modifying transmission pattern... as a backup.

D'BRANIN
I see. Perhaps you ought to turn the disc over to Jon... as a backup.

AUDREY
That's not fair, Vladimir! I'm doing everything I...

JON
I don't think it's a good idea.

Everyone turns to Jon, including Eliza who glares at him, speaking telepathically:

ELIZA (V.O.)
What the hell are you...?

Jon ignores her, addressing D'Branin:

JON
I don't want anything that could confuse the signals I'm picking up.

D'BRANIN
What signals?

Eliza speaks calmly, attempting to dilute the anxiety:

ELIZA
He's a universal conductor. You have no idea how much cosmic garbage comes through him.
(smiling at Miranda)
Anything of significance will develop into a pattern.

JON
It has...

Everyone turns to him again.

JON
I just can't put it into words yet.

Eliza hides her distress, speaking to Jon telepathically:

ELIZA (V.O.)
What the hell are you doing?

D'BRANIN
The Volcryn?

JON
I don't think so...

Just then, an intense beam of red light shines down from the ceiling. ROYD ERRIS, the captain of the Nightflyer materializes in the chair opposite D'Branin, in the form of a shimmering, holographic projection.

The holograph is a handsome, pale-eyed young man with short, copper-colored hair. He wears grey, metal-flaked clothes that wrap loosely around his body.

ROYD'S HOLO
I apologize for my tardiness but it was unavoidable.

ANGLE ON OWL AND AUDREY - He whispers to her:

OWL
Is this some kind of joke?

AUDREY
Shhhhhh.

Miranda and D'Branin exchange glances. D'Branin is as perplexed as the others, but he tries to appear nonchalant.

D'Branin glances up at the ceiling where the holographic projector is hidden, and then back at the ghostly figure sitting opposite him.

D'BRANIN
Ah... How shall I phrase this..?

ROYD'S HOLO
You're curious about my present form...

D'Branin nods his head.

CLOSE ON ROYD'S HOLOGRAPH - A smile forms on his lips.

ROYD'S HOLO
I find that on the Nightflyer, there is always a great deal of work to be done, and only a finite amount of time in which to do it. By sending out my holograph, I am, in a manner of speaking, able to be in two places at once... No disrespect is intended.

The team exchange glances in reaction to this. D'Branin however, acts as if he's satisfied with Royd's explanation.

D'BRANIN
None taken... I'd like to introduce you to my team...

ANGLE ON OWL - He whispers to Lilly:

OWL
This is the wierdest fucking thing I've ever seen...

LILLY
(whispering to Audrey)
Look at him. It's like he's looking right through you.

AUDREY
What do you expect from a holograph, eye contact?

CLOSE ON THE HOLOGRAPH - His unseeing eyes seem focused on Miranda.

D'Branin turns to her.

D'BRANIN
Royd Erris, this is...

ROYD'S HOLO
Forgive me for interrupting, but I have a terrible memory for names.

Miranda smiles. Apparently she is the only one who finds this amusing.

ROYD'S HOLO
There will be more than enough time, for all of us to become acquainted...

He seems distracted by something across the table.

ANGLE ON JON AND ELIZA - Eliza sees that Jon is staring off into space, with a pained look in his eyes. She takes his hand, whispering telepathically.

ELIZA (V.O.)
What are you feeling?

A fine sweat breaks out on Jon's face.

ELIZA (V.O.)
Talk to me, dammit!

CLOSE ON JON - The veins on his neck swell and throb visibly. We hear the rushing sound which we heard earlier, when he first saw the ship. He speaks aloud:

JON
Pressure.

Everyone in the room turns to him.

D'BRANIN
What was that?

ELIZA
QUIET! Please....

CLOSE ON JON - He holds his head as the pressure increases. The RUSHING sound grows progressively louder.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She looks from Jon to Royd's holograph.

HER POV: A look of concern comes into the holograph's face.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

The conference table is featured in the master console. The camera zooms in until Jon's face fills the screen. He looks terrified.

The silver gloved hand quickly picks up the lightpen, flashing it at the oval monitor. The screen goes black.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON JON - A shudder passes through his body, then he relaxes.

JON
It's gone.

The other members of the project stare at him. And then at Royd's holograph, which has remained in his chair seat at the head of the table, throughout this incident.

Eliza looks closely into Jon's eyes, speaking aloud:

ELIZA
Are you okay?

CLOSE ON JON - He nods his head, but telepathically we hear:

JON (V.O.)
No... I'm not!

CLOSE ON ELIZA - She covers her concern, asking aloud:

ELIZA
Can you talk about what you felt?

Jon is having trouble maintaining his self-composure. He answers telepathically.

JON (V.O.)
No! Please get me out of here!

The crew look at one another uneasily. Eliza smiles, addressing them in a calm, deliberate manner.

ELIZA
There's nothing to be concerned about. I'm afraid Jon is a little oversensitive from his last expedition and he needs some time to adjust to the ship. I'm going to take him back to our cabin, to rest.

She starts to help Jon to his feet, but he manages on his own. The door opens and they leave. The team members glance uncomfortably at one another and then at the holograph, still seated at the head of the table.

ROYD'S HOLO
I'm sure you all have work to attend to, as I do, so I will bid you goodnight.

D'BRANIN
Very well, Captain. Goodnight.

The holograph disappears. D'Branin pauses a moment, and then acting as if nothing unusual had happened, glances at his flight intinerary. He resumes where he left off earlier:

D'BRANIN
As soon as we drop out of drive, we're going to need a complete spectral analysis of the entire targeted area which the Volcryn are due to pass through. Owl...

Owl looks from D'Branin up to the recessed holographic projector in the ceiling.

OWL
Complete spectral analysis... No problem.

The rest of the team look questioningly at each other and then at D'Branin.

FADE TO:

INT. JON AND ELIZA'S CABIN; - NIGHT

Eliza opens the door and helps Jon over to his bed. He lies down, and she sits beside him.

ELIZA
Can't you control yourself?

We hear the RUSHING sound, which grows louder as we move in closer to Jon. He turns back to stare up at the ceiling.

ELIZA
You can't do this to me again!

HIS POV - For a brief flash, the wall covering of the room seems to burn away, revealing a network of veins carrying a pulsing, vermilion-colored liquid throughout the ship.

ELIZA (V.O.)
Jon...

BACK TO SCENE - Eliza sees that he's gone into a trance. She checks his eyes, breathing, and pulse. Opening up her medical kit, she take out a hypodermic gun and loads in a vial containing a purple liquid. Eliza places the gun against Jon's neck and pulls the trigger. He begins to relax almost immediately. Eliza watches him a moment, then sits down beside him, stroking his forehead.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

We see the same image on the oval monitor of Royd's console.

FADE TO:

INT. CARGO BAY #1 - NIGHT

Audrey and Lilly are unpacking the last of the computer and communication equipment, setting it up against the false wall of the bay. They pause to catch their breath.

AUDREY
We're stuck here in a cargo bay, on a ship captained by a holographic projection, flying with an unstable telepath, on a mission to establish communication with the most alien life form in the universe...

LILLY
It's perfect.

She starts running some tests on the tracking system while Audrey enters commands via a keyboard.

AUDREY
The ship doesn't seem to have any crew, except for Royd, right?

LILLY
We'd have no way of knowing... but for the sake of argument...

AUDREY
Why not complete automation?

LILLY
No reason I can think of.

AUDREY
I bet Royd Erris doesn't even exist... I bet that holograph is just a a sophisticated artificial intelligence.

LILLY
It'd have to awfully sophisticated, if it's just a program.

AUDREY
We'll find out, one way or the other.

LILLY
Don't you think there's something else you should find out, first?

AUDREY
What?

Lilly switches on a small disc player and we hear a series of arythmic, wave-like sounds. Audrey shuts the disc.

AUDREY
Please. I've already memorized it. I go to sleep with it... I dream about the Volcryn disc... It's become the single most irritating sound in my entire life.

LILLY
Maybe you should let Jon listen to it.

AUDREY
No way! Besides he said it would confuse him... I'll figure the damn thing out myself... Although I wouldn't mind working with him.

Lilly makes an adjustment on the transmitter and it begins emitting a high-pitched squelch.

LILLY
Pardon?

AUDREY
Nothing.

She puts on a pair of headphones and sets to work once again on the dreaded Volcryn disc.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - We move back to reveal this scene being watched on the large screen. The other screens show the rest of the team in their separate quarters.

The silver-gloved hand flashes the lightpen, changing the image on the oval monitor to D'Branin's cabin.

ON THE OVAL MONITOR - D'Branin is seated at his desk speaking into a microphone attached to his portable computer. The visuals on the screen range from cave drawings to computer-generated images.

D'BRANIN
When Jesus of Nazareth hung dying on his cross, the Volcryn passed within a light-year of his agony, headed outward.

The image switches to Cargo bay #2, where Owl is working on a small hydroponic garden. Behind him, a makeshift biological laboratory complete with some sort of robotic, surgical/scanner device has already been set up. D'Branin's narration continues:

D'BRANIN (O.S.)
When the fire wars raged on Earth, the Volcryn sailed near Old Poseidon, where the seas were still unnamed and unfinished.

The image changes to the small private cabin where we see Eliza attaching some sort of monitoring device to Jon's forehead, while he lies asleep.

D'BRANIN (O.S.)
When Kleronomas the Great took his survey ship out in search of new treasures, he came within ten light years of the Volcryn. Kleronomas found many things, but he did not find the Volcryn...

The image switches to Darryl in the galley, loading the team's supplies into their respective places.

D'BRANIN (O.S.)
When I was a child of three, Kleronomas the Great was dust, as distant and dead as Jesus of Nazareth, the Volcryn passed close to Daronne.

The image changes to a corridor where Miranda is walking to Jon and Eliza's cabin. The door opens and Eliza stands protectively blocking the entranceway.

Miranda asks something about Jon, which Eliza answers with some irritation. But then she says something else which makes Eliza laugh and she looks less threatened by Miranda. The door closes.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JON AND ELIZA'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - As she walks away, she senses the camera up on the wall silently panning to follow her.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

Miranda's image grows on the oval screen as she approaches. We sense Royd's growing fascination with this beautiful woman. It becomes even more apparent as the lightpen flashes, freezing her in space, before returning to D'Branin's cabin, as he completes his report on the Volcryn.

D'BRANIN (O.S.)
When I was grown, the Volcryn sailed beyond the galaxy of Tara, past the range of even the Crey, still heading outward....

He stares at a color picture up on his wall of a beautiful spiral nebulae. We move in until it fills the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NIGHTFLYER - HYPERSPACE - NIGHT

The ship is a blur of light as it streams through space at stardrive speed.

FADE TO:

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - EARLY MORNING

The bank of monitors show show the rose-colored lights of artificial dawn begin to come up slowly around the ship.

We see all the team members are still asleep, except for Miranda who is beginning a workout on a compact, anti-gravity gym.

The silver-gloved hand flashes the lightpen, and we cut to:

INT. CARGO BAY #3 - EARLY MORNING

Miranda is beginning a gymnastic routine when the shimmering form of Royd's holographic spectre appears before her.

Miranda pauses briefly, holding her body aloft.

ROYD'S HOLO
Your stamina is quite impressive.

MIRANDA
(laughs) Compared to what?

ROYD'S HOLO
Others, I've watched.

Miranda looks closely at the holograph, then resumes her routine.

MIRANDA
My parents were geneticists. I guess you could say I was their private research project. They were trying to create an improved model.

Miranda dismounts with a flourish, landing inches from the specter. She picks up a towel.

ROYD'S HOLO
Obviously the experiment was successful.

MIRANDA
Sometimes, I have my doubts. But I'd much rather hear your life story, Royd.

ROYD'S HOLO
One as improved as you, should be able to guess...

MIRANDA
(laughs) Allright, Royd. I'm in no hurry. I love mysteries...

She walks right through the holograph's shimmering form and out the door. The holograph remains in the empty room for a moment as if stunned, then disappears.

INT. GALLEY - DAY

CLOSE ON A RECESSED VIDEO CAMERA - We follow the camera tilting downward to see Darryl loading the last of the dishes from breakfast into the robotic dishwasher. It closes itself, then switches itself on.

He opens the refrigerator and removes a large rectangular block of grey, gelatinous synthetic protein, then rinses it in the anti-gravity sink. Humming to himself while he works, Darryl sets the protein block on the counter, and pats it dry with a towel.

Darryl rummages through the drawers and cupboards looking through the collection of exotic appliances (which belong to the ship,) until he comes upon a triangular-shaped machine whose appearance suggests an alien Cuisinart.

Darryl sets the machine on the counter. As he does, it makes a soft-whirring noise as the top dilates, like the iris of a camera.

DARRYL
Cute.

He peers into the bowl, to see how the device cuts.

DARRYL'S POV - looking down into the transluscent, triangular bowl. The blade is missing.

He looks back in the cupboard and finds a gleaming, double-sided cutting tool, which obviously belongs to it.

Humming again, Darryl picks up the tool and reaches into the bowl, attempting to insert it into the motor mount. We hear a click, as the blade locks into place.

Darryl starts to pull his hand out, when we hear the soft, whirring noise as the iris/top closes around his forearm. Looking a bit scared, he tries pulling his arm out, but it's clearly stuck. Then we hear a high-pitched whining noise.

CLOSE ON DARRYL - He looks down at the transluscent, triangular bowl and screams as it turns bright red.

INT. CARGO BAY #2 - DAY

CLOSE ON A ROBOTIC ARM - It is using a cutting tool, methodically slicing open the tops on a row of sealed cardboard boxes.

We move back to reveal Owl typing into a computer terminal which directs the operations of this surgical/scanner machine to which the arm is connected.

ANGLE ON THE TABLE - After the boxes are sliced open, Owl removes the contents: bottles of chemicals, beakers and measuring devices, and other supplies, which he places on shelves in the lab.

Owl reaches for the flask from his flight suit but finds it empty. He returns to the workbench and picks up a box marked DANGER: RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS.

He gingerly reaches into it, revealing it to be filled with bottles of 100% grain alcohol. Owl opens one of bottles, and and pours the contents into a coffee cup he is about to drink when the door to the bay suddenly slides open.

Darryl walks slowly over to him, looking white as a ghost. A bloody dish towel is wrapped around his right hand.

OWL
What the hell's happened?

DARRYL
Let's just say, I'm an idiot...

He moves closer to Owl, starting to hand something to him when he nearly falls. Owl grabs him just as he loses consciousness. He lifts Darryl up onto the table of the surgical/scanner machine. Then he notices the small plastic bag clutched tightly in his left hand.

Owl extracts the bag and we see that it contains the tips of three of Darryl's fingers.

Blanching, Owl applies a tourniquet to Darryl's wrist, then quickly sterilizes the hand and the severed fingers. Owl clamps the hand to the table, moving the scanner head so that it is directly over it. He goes to the computer terminal, typing in a command.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN - We see a detailed x-ray of Darryl's hand. The image changes to a highly magnified view of the end of one finger, showing the nerve endings.

Owl types in a series of commands which activate a robotic hand connected to the surgical/scanner machine.

CLOSE OF THE ROBOTIC HAND - It picks up one of the severed finger tips and lines it up with its former finger.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN - We see the nerve endings moving until they are perfectly lined up.

ANGLE ON THE SURGICAL/SCANNER HEAD - A thin, red laser beam cauterizes the wound.

ANGLE ON OWL - He types in a command and a second robotic hand applies a healing solution, then bandages the joint.

FADE TO:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Darryl emerges from the galley, with a large bandage around his right hand, holding a tray with pizza and assorted drinks. He sets it down on the oval-shaped table where the team have assembled.

DARRYL
Allright, anyone who makes a wise crack does the dishes.

AUDREY
Anyone who's stupid enough to stick his hand into a alien food processor, deserves a wise crack.

DARRYL
Hey, I have an active and inquiring mind. I can't help myself.

AUDREY
That's not the only thing he's got that's active and inquiring. He's lucky he cooks with his hands...

The door opens and Owl enters, walking towards the table.

DARRYL
My savior. Here, I set a special place for you.

Darryl ushers Owl over to one of the chairs, where he's set a place with a cloth napkin, real silverware, and a wine glass. Owl laughs, sitting down.

DARRYL
If you need anything that's not on the menu, just let me know.

OWL
Give me a break, will you.

He takes a piece of pizza, and notices Royd's vacant seat at the head of the table. Owl glances up at the recessed holographic projector in the ceiling.

OWL
Anybody seen the phantom today?

AUDREY
Royd? He hasn't made an appearance since breakfast.

DARRYL
You notice his clothes? They must be 10 years out of style.

LILLY
He makes me nervous... And I don't think I'm the only one that feels that way...

D'Branin stops eating and turns to her.

D'BRANIN
Could you be more specific?

Lilly seems self-conscious at being put on the spot.

LILLY
It's hard to explain. I guess I'd feel a lot better if I could see Royd in person... that's all.

DARRYL
I'd like to know something about his personal background.

D'Branin snaps at them with surprising vehemence.

D'BRANIN
Have any of you been inconvenienced by Royd's desire for privacy?
(no one answers)
The port officials at Avalon had no data on personal background.

Owl nods cynically, glancing up at the recessed projector in the ceiling.

OWL
No, data, huh...

He reaches for another slice of pizza and eats it as he walks back toward the rear of the lounge.

ANGLE ON D'BRANIN - He works to control his temper.

OWL
I'll bet you Royd doesn't look anything like that projection.

AUDREY
Why?

OWL
He's probably sick or so deformed he's ashamed to show his true form.

DARRYL
For all we know he could be some kind of radioactive mutant...

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - She smiles, amused by the speculation.

MIRANDA
Don't stop. It's just getting good.

DARRYL
Miranda, it's possible.

OWL
He could have the Slow Plague. It takes decades to kill... And then there's New Leprosy and Langamen's disease! Royd's probably in some kind of self-imposed quarantine.

ANGLE ON D'BRANIN - disgusted, he leaves the lounge.

LILLY
What's Langamen's disease?

OWL
Oh, that's when little greenish-orangy spiny cysts form all over your body and gradually turn into a crispy, reddish-brown crust, like... Like this!
(holding up his pizza to his cheek)
This is exactly what Langamen's disease looks like... Before it really takes hold.

AUDREY
Do you mind? I'm trying to eat!

Owl laughs and takes another bite. He turns away from them, examining the rear wall of the lounge.

On the opposite wall, a hidden camera zooms in on him.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - DAY

We see Owl on the large video monitor. He runs his hand along the wall, testing it for soundness. Behind him, we see Jon and Eliza enter the lounge.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Jon has a bright, almost feverish look to his eyes, but otherwise seems to be back to normal. He and Eliza sit at the table as Darryl emerges from the galley with a fresh pizza.

DARRYL
Jon! You're back with the living. You had us a little worried yesterday...

He sets the pizza on the table, then sits joining them. Audrey comes over and sits next on the other side of Jon.

AUDREY
You look like you're feeling better.

Eliza looks at her, picking up on her interest in Jon.

AUDREY
Were you... able to get any closer to what was bothering you?

JON
I think Eliza was right... It's just getting acclimated to the energy on the ship.
(He tastes a piece of pizza)
Mmmmmmm. Delicious.

DARRYL
Glad you like it. It's not easy to toss a pizza with one hand....

He pantomimes tossing it.

CLOSE ON JON - He stares at Darryl's bandaged hand for a moment, and we hear faint RUSHING sounds, as if Jon were picking up psychic signals from it.

Darryl walks away and Jon glances at Miranda, who's watching Owl checking out the rear wall of the lounge. Owl walks back toward them with an odd look on his face.

MIRANDA
Something wrong, Owl?

OWL
I guess it depends on what side of the wall you're on...

He sits back down at the table.

MIRANDA
Would you care to elaborate on that... or were you just being existential?

OWL

There's no doors to Royd's cabin. I've already checked the hall. He's sealed in there.

The room becomes silent as everyone looks in the direction of the rear wall of the lounge.

Jon claps his hands, startling them.

Eliza looks panicked, but before she can stop him, Jon is already up on his feet, beaming with delight.

JON

Are you kidding? He's sealed in there? That's great! Forget Langamen's disease... That opens up a whole other set of possibilities.

OWL

Pardon..

JON

You were wondering about Royd... Why limit yourselves to diseases or deformities? He could be real monster! Like a gas giant from Io! Crack open the forward bulkhead and watch that methane and ammonia come smoking out!

Everyone stares at him, not knowing what to think. Only Miranda seems amused.

ELIZA

He's kidding.

She looks like she's like to strangle Jon.

JON

I'm deadly serious. Royd could be anything in the world... Don't any of you love a mystery?

He looks out in the room. For a moment, his and Miranda's eyes meet and we see the sparkle between them. Audrey sees it and we sense her jealousy. Eliza also sees it, but we see an understanding and no sign of resentment.

JON
Here we all are on an expedition to intercept an alien starship from the core of the galaxy... and you're upset because you can't count the warts on Royd's nose?

Owl, Darryl, Eliza and Lilly look at one another, as if asking themselves if perhaps they've been overacting.

Jon comes back to the table and picks up a piece of pizza. He bites into it and walks toward the door.

JON
Then again... he may not have a nose.

Laughing to himself, he walks out of the lounge. Eliza rises quickly, following him out.

After an brief pause, the rest of the team, rise and begin filing out of the lounge.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - amused by what has just transpired, she takes a sip of coffee and turns to look at the wall-sized screen.

HER POV - We see the view of space from the camera on the nose of the ship. The luminous, deep blue radiance fills the screen.

FADE TO:

INT. CARGO HOLD #3 - NIGHT

Miranda is sitting cross-legged on the floor, studying a holographic chessboard.

MIRANDA
Rook to queen's pawn.

The piece moves by itself to the sixth rank.

Miranda glances up at Royd's holographic specter which is "seated" opposite her. His sigh is heard through the communicator on the wall.

ROYD
I resign. That makes eight losses in a row. Am I really worth playing?

MIRANDA
Of course you are.

ROYD
I should tie in my computer, you'd never know.

MIRANDA
I'd know within three moves. Try it.

Miranda gets up and walks directly through Royd's projection on her way to the kitchen.

Royd's holograph looks disturbed as it stands watching her get a beer from the mini-refrigerator.

ROYD'S HOLO
I wish you wouldn't do that.

Miranda walks through him again, feigning innocence. She takes a large sip before turning back to him.

MIRANDA
Do what, Royd?

ROYD'S HOLO
You ability to play chess is only exceeded by your ability to tease. Was that built in along with your other genetic improvements?

MIRANDA
(laughs) Actually, I had to develop that on my own. Along with a few other abilities... When are you going to break down and let me visit you in person, Captain?

She ignores the holograph, speaking directly towards the video camera, mounted on the wall above her.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - We see Miranda looking directly at us, with the holograph standing behind her, like an injured lover.

MIRANDA
Don't you get lonely in there? Claustrophobic? Sexually frustrated?

*INT. CARGO BAY #3 - NIGHT*

Miranda continues to ignore the holograph behind her.

ROYD'S HOLO
I've flown the Nightflyer all my life, Miranda. If I were subject to claustrophobia, sexual frustration or loneliness, such a life would have been impossible.

MIRANDA
It won't be long, Royd... and I'll know why.

She turns around and the holograph disappears into thin air.

FADE TO:

INT. JON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Jon is sleeping uneasily in his bunk. We move in close on his face. The RUSHING sound we heard earlier becomes progressively louder until it becomes an EXPLOSION. Jon awakens suddenly. Catching his breath, he looks over at Eliza sleeping in the adjacent bed. He moves to wake her then changes his mind and quietly leaves the room.

INT. NIGHTFLYER - D'BRANIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

Large color transparencies of cave paintings, radio telescopic images, and artistic renderings of the Volcryn are clipped to an illuminated walls. There is an overabundance of research material piled everywhere.

D'Branin takes a sip of coffee as he re-reads one of the legends on his computer. He presses the illuminated panel on the wall.

D'BRANIN
Royd..?

Royd's voice comes over the com system:

ROYD
Yes, Dr. D'Branin.

D'BRANIN
According to our schedule, we still have a little over 72 hours before we actually drop out.

D'Branin is startled by Royd's holograph materializing beside him.

ROYD'S HOLO
Correct, 72 hours and 26 minutes... Forgive me if I startled you...

D'BRANIN
Not at all. I just wasn't expecting a... personal visit.

He studies the holograph, glancing at it's hidden source in the ceiling. Then he looks at one of the Volcryn illustrations, taking a deep sip from his mug.

D'BRANIN
I am so close now. After twelve years, it seems hard to believe.

ROYD'S HOLO
The consummation, of so much work... I can imagine your excitement.

D'BRANIN
Think of it Royd... A race of sentients sailing out from some unknown origin in the core of the galaxy, bound for intergallactic space... always keeping to the interstellar depths, no planetfalls, seldom coming within a lightyear of a star... If only we can communicate with them... To know the why of them.

The holograph smiles. D'Branin looks over at it, beginning to think of it as a friend.

ROYD
Doctor, I've wanted to thank you... for respecting my privacy.

D'BRANIN
Don't mention it, Royd... It's certainly one thing we're all...

There is a pounding on the door. The holograph disappears.

D'BRANIN
Come in.

Jon enters and closes the door quickly. He looks as ill as we've seen him since he's boarded the ship.

JON
We have to turn back. Immediately.

D'Branin tries not to lose his temper.

D'BRANIN
I'm afraid that's not possible. What's the problem? Are you picking up the Volcryn?

Jon shakes his head. He speaks to D'Branin telepathically:

JON (V.O.)
No. This is close. On the ship. Something volatile... dangerous. I haven't been able to get to the source yet...

CLOSE ON D'BRANIN - He is startled to hear Jon's words inside his own skull. He starts to say something.

JON (V.O.)
Don't speak aloud!

This is too much for D'Branin and he raises his voice:

D'BRANIN
Have you've talked to Eliza about this?

JON
No. I felt I should see you right away.

D'BRANIN
I appreciate that, but there's nothing I can do unless you have something concrete.

JON
This is real!

D'Branin gets up and walks him to the door.

D'BRANIN
Talk to Eliza. I'm sure she can help you.

Jon leaves, looking even more disturbed than before.

D'Branin returns to his desk. He attempts to return to work but is unable to throw off an uneasy feeling. He presses the com button again.

D'BRANIN
Royd...

There is no response. He closes his computer and leaves the cabin.

INT. ELIZA AND JON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eliza is asleep in bed when there is a knock on the door. She wakes up, and is disturbed at seeing Jon's bed empty.

CLOSE ON ELIZA - She closes her eyes and we DISSOLVE TO:

HER MIND'S EYE POV - Jon can be seen walking down the dimly-lit corridor of the ship, heading towards Cargo Bay #3.

BACK TO SCENE - We hear the knock again. Eliza opens the door, revealing D'Branin standing in the hallway. He peers around her and sees that she's alone.

D'BRANIN
I was looking for Jon...

ELIZA
Can I can help you with something?

D'Branin enters and the door closes behind him.

D'BRANIN
He came to see me earlier... about a threat of some sort.

ELIZA
I see. Did he tell you anything specific?

D'BRANIN
No... but he seemed extremely disturbed.

ELIZA
Class ten's are all unstable in one way or another. It's the price you pay for that kind of sensitivity. I'll have to give him more Psionine.

D'BRANIN
Psionine?

ELIZA
A powerful psychic damper. His receptivity will be severly curtailed for several days..

D'BRANIN
Several days!? We need him! We'll be dropping out of drive...

ELIZA
Do you want to lose him for the rest of the flight?

It's becoming progressively more difficult for D'Branin to control his temper.

D'BRANIN
Have you come to any conclusions yet about what he's been picking up?

ELIZA
His mind is in such a state of chaos, it's impossible to evaluate what's coming in.

D'BRANIN
You're supposed to be an empath!

ELIZA
I am an empath! If you don't trust me, you shouldn't have hired me.

D'BRANIN
I apologize... We're so close now... and there is so much at stake... I'm... Are you absolutely sure he has to remain dampened?

ELIZA
The only other option would be to give him an injection of esperon. It would triple his psionic receptivity for a few hours. Open him up completely.

D'BRANIN
And we'd find out if it this thing is real or not?

ELIZA
(She nods) But, I don't think he's stable enough to deal with that kind of power. Psionine is safer. If his paranoia persists, we'll know it has nothing to do with his telepathy.

D'BRANIN
And if it doesn't?

ELIZA
Then we'll know there's a real threat.

D'Branin stares at her oddly for a moment. Eliza laughs, having read his mind.

ELIZA
In answer to your question... No, I'm not a complete fraud.

D'Branin smiles, somewhat reassured.

D'BRANIN
Please keep me informed.

The door opens and he leaves.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON OVAL MONITOR - We see Jon walking down the corridor which leads to Cargo Bay #3 and Miranda's cabin.

INT. CORRIDOR APPROACHING CARGO BAY #3 - NIGHT

Jon looks weak and physically unstable as he approaches the entrance to the bay. A recessed camera up near the ceiling, pans in his direction. Jon stares at it.

We begin to hear the rhythmic, RUSHING sounds, which grow louder as Jon approaches the camera. He begins to sweat visibly and leans back against the wall for support. The RUSHING sounds come progressively faster until they are constant.

CLOSE ON JON - He holds his ears, falling to the floor.

JON'S POV - The fabric covering the walls seems to burn away, revealing the network of glowing red "veins" which pulse throughout the entire ship. The RUSHING sound grows louder and louder as we move in closer to the veins, following them into the wall.

We see that all the veins run into an enormous, intricately faceted, ruby-colored stone which glows with its own fiery, inner light. We move in on this stone until it fills the screen. From O.S. we hear Jon scream.

BACK TO SCENE - Miranda emerges from the bay to see Jon on the floor, clutching his head. She rushes over and kneels beside him.

CLOSE ON JON - He looks up at her as if his mind were a great distance away.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She takes Jon's hand, speaking to him telepathically:

MIRANDA (V.O.)
Talk to me Jon... What is it?

Behind them, D'Branin and Eliza appear from the opposite end of the corridor. She yells to Miranda:

ELIZA
Don't touch him!

Eliza and D'Branin get to Jon at just about the same time as the rest of the team arrive. Jon speaks aloud:

JON
An alien mind...

She kneels down beside him, trying to get through to him telepathically.

ELIZA (V.O.)
I feel it too, Jon... Don't resist it! Let it come through you!

Jon suddenly gets to his feet, trying to run.

ELIZA
Jon! (To the others) Stop him!

Owl and Darryl grab Jon, wrestling him to the ground.

CLOSE ON JON - He is on the verge of psychosis now.

Eliza takes her injection gun from her medical bag but as she approaches Jon, he whips his head from side to side, smashing it into one of the ship's metal support struts. He passes out as blood begins pouring everywhere.

ELIZA
Quick! Help me get him into the medical bay!

Owl lifts him onto his shoulder and carries him down the corridor.

INT. CARGO BAY # 2 - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE SURGICAL SCANNER MACHINE - It gleams softly in the room's dim light.

OWL
Clear the table off!

Audrey and Lilly do as they're told and Jon is laid down on the table. Meanwhile, Eliza, and Miranda work quickly, cleaning, and suturing the wound.

ELIZA
Let's get the scanner on him.

Darryl and D'Branin attach arm and leg restraints to Jon. The others observe as Owl nervously types a series of commands into the computer which controls the scanner.

CLOSE ON OWL - He can't seem to get the machine to do what he wants it to do. Sweating, he reaches for his "coffee" cup, and a takes a drink. Setting it back down beside the terminal, he types another command and watches the screen.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN - It lights up with a drawing that show's Jon form, lying on the table. His brain and vital internal organs are highlighted.

OWL
Alright..

Owl type in another command and the scanner head jerks to life then starting at Jon's feet, begins moving swiftly up his body toward his head. Owl begins to relax. He takes another sip from his cup and sets it back down.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN - The scanner head passes over each organ, revealing all vital signs: respiration, heart beat and brain waves all appear to be normal.

OWL
There's no fracture... I don't see anything metabolically wrong with him.

Jon starts to regain consciousness. Eliza comes over to him.

ELIZA
How are you feeling?

Jon looks up as a hidden camera, high up on the wall, pans in his direction. He watches it with the same wide-eyed expression as before.

JON
We're being watched.

D'BRANIN
The symptoms seem to be persisting.

Eliza takes the injection gun from her medical bag and fills it with psionine.

D'BRANIN
Why don't you try the Esperon... as you suggested.

Eliza hesitates, evidently not wanting to do it.

MIRANDA
Couldn't Esperon boost his signals to a point where he could focus on the threat?

ELIZA
I aware of the characteristics of...

OWL
Absolutely! Give him some Esperon! He'll be able to tell us Royd's entire life history!

MIRANDA
Hold it. I don't think focusing on on Royd is the point...

OWL
No? Then you're the only one.

Miranda looks back, seeing that the others all seem to be in agreement with him. They all look at D'Branin.

D'Branin doesn't want to offend Royd, but he wants a mutiny even less. He turns to Eliza.

D'BRANIN
Give him the Esperon.

Eliza looks at Jon on the table and then back at D'Branin, in way that makes it clear that this is his responsibility. She removes the Psionine from the injection gun and takes a vial of Esperon from her medical bag.

CLOSE ON JON - He stares at the vial.

JON'S POV: CLOSE ON THE VIAL - The ruby colored drug almost seems to glow with it's own light.

Eliza loads the Esperon into the injection gun. As she brings it closer to Jon, he screams:

JON
NO! PLEASE!!

Royd's holograph appears beside the table.

ROYD
There's no need for that. Release him.

OWL
He HAS been watching us.

D'BRANIN
I'm sorry this had to happen Royd.

AUDREY

Sorry!?

ROYD'S HOLO

I'll tell you my great secret, if my privacy intimidates you so... Although your guesses were amusing, I'm afraid they were far from the mark. In truth, I am only...

CLOSE ON VIDEO CAMERA - High up on the wall, the camera silently pans over to Owl.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN; CONTROL CONSOLE - NIGHT

On the master monitor, the image zooms in on Owl as he surreptitiously grabs the injection gun and pushes it against Jon's neck.

INT. CARGO BAY#3 - NIGHT

Royd's holograph moves right beside Owl. His voice roars into the bay:

ROYD

NO! Stop. I order it! This is my ship. STOP!

Owl presses the trigger, emptying the drug into Jon's bloodstream.

There is a silence in the room as everyone waits for the drug to take effect. Eliza watches Jon closely as he slowly looks over at her, beginning to shiver.

JON

I'm cold.... It's so cold...

ELIZA

It's the Esperon.... It'll stop in a minute. Let it help you... Tell us what you see.

Jon stops shaking. His blue eyes cloud over.

JON
Not close enough.

ELIZA
Relax. It'll give you the range... Can you feel it? Everything is getting clearer now, isn't it?

Jon's eyes clear. He laughs, in an oddly casual fashion as if amused by a revelation.

CLOSE ON A HIDDEN VIDEO CAMERA - It zooms in for a closeup.

CLOSE ON JON - He stares at the camera, as if really seeing the person behind it. Then a look of panic envelopes him. He turns to Eliza and clutches her hand. She strokes his forehead.

ELIZA
It'll clear. Don't be afraid. Just tell us what you see.

CLOSE ON JON - From his face, we dissolve to:

HIS POV: INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

On the oval monitor, we see a fairly wide shot of Jon on the operating table, with the holograph standing nearby.

An adjacent monitor, shows a close up of the computer terminal, which controls the surgical/scanner.

The image pans over to the cup which Owl had set down earlier. Sitting beneath the cup we can see the computer which controls the scanner/surgical machine.

CLOSE ON THIS SMALLER SCREEN - Seemingly on it's own power, the cup begins to slide, towards the edge of the table.

INT. CARGO BAY #3 - NIGHT

CLOSE ON JON - He looks over at the computer terminal, staring as if in a trance.

HIS POV - The cup continues sliding, until it falls off the edge of the table... and onto the computer lying beneath it.

As is does, the liquid causes a sparking to occur in the computer. And the sparking ignites the alcohol.

D'BRANIN
Owl, what the hell's going on!?

OWL
The computer's shorting out. Get the extinguisher!

Darryl finds the extinguisher and brings it over to the computer, spraying it on the fire. It puts out the fire, creating a thick cloud of steam and smoke. But the sparking gets worse, and several lights on the operating table blow out, making it even darker.

We hear a strange buzzing noise. Jon looks up, to his right.

JON'S POV - The laser surgical arm jerks to life shooting a thin crimson beam out into the dimly-lit bay.

ELIZA
What the hell's going on? Shut the machine!

She frantically tries to unclamp Jon's arm restraints, but one of the robotic surgical hands jerks to life, smashing into her temple. She slumps to the floor.

Owl rushes over to the computer terminal and finds it no longer has any effect on the machine. He reaches for the power switch.

CLOSE ON THE SWITCH - As Owl's hand approaches it, the surgical arm whips around, cutting across his wrist.

Owl screams, pulling his hand away. He tries again and is burned even worse this time.

OWL
Dammit!

D'BRANIN
There's got to be some other way of shutting it off... Royd!

ROYD'S HOLO
There is no remote response. You'll have to physically sever the machine from it's power source.

Jon is still lying on the table, but no one can get near him. He looks at the holograph and suddenly yells out:

JON
He's not controlling it at all! It's his...

But his voice is cut off by a sickening, sizzling noise as the laser beam cuts through Jon's neck, decapitating him.

Lilly screams, and the others react to the sight of Jon's headless torso on the operating table. On it's next arc, the laser slices off Jon's left arm at the shoulder

The screaming continues as the machine begins randomly performing portions of preprogrammed surgical operations: One of Jon's eyes are extracted. In another pass, a non-existent tumor is operated on.

Interspersed with the precise surgical moves, the laser continues shooting erratically in all directions. Miranda runs away from the table and over to a work bench where she grabs a small, laser cutting torch. She switches it on. The torch produces a thin, sapphire-colored beam.

Keeping low, she heads back to the surgical/scanner machine. Inching as close as she dares, Miranda aims the torch at the cable running from the machine to the ship's power outlet.

She turns the torch's power up all the way and the thin blue beam severs the cable in less than a second.

The surgical/scanner machine suddenly goes dead.

D'Branin and the others stare in horror at the carnage around them.

Miranda comes over to where Eliza is lying on the floor, in a semi-conscious state. She kneels down by her and sees that a small piece of metal has snapped off from the surgical hand, and is imbedded into her temple.

MIRANDA
Owl, help me get her into her cabin. Audrey, can the three of you wrap Jon in those sheets and get him into the pod bay?

The three of them overcome their revulsion, swiftly doing as they're told, following Miranda and Owl out of the bay. Finding himself alone, D'Branin calls out:

D'BRANIN
Royd...

But there is no response.

INT. CARGO BAY #1; MIRANDA'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eliza is heavily sedated, lying on her bed while Miranda removes the metal fragment from her forehead.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - Working quickly, she applies a liquid suture to the wound, then covers Eliza with a blanket and leaves the room.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Miranda enters, finding rest of the team already there.

LILLY
I still don't understand what could've caused... what happened.

OWL
What there not to understand? Jon was about to reveal the truth about Royd, and he killed him.

MIRANDA
Actually, I think Royd was about to "reveal the truth", himself, when you gave Jon the injection.

OWL
Come off it. Look what he did to him!

MIRANDA
How could Royd have caused the machine to behave that way?

OWL
That's what we'd like to know!

MIRANDA
Sorry, but I don't believe it. And there doesn't seem to be any evidence to support Royd's guilt.

AUDREY
Did you see how fast his holograph disappeared when it happened?

MIRANDA
This is all pure conjecture...

The door to the lounge opens and a grim-looking D'Branin enters, carrying his a small flightbag. He sits beside Miranda.

MIRANDA
(Continued)
We can't condemn Royd until we hear his side of what happened.

OWL
So where is he?

D'BRANIN
How is Eliza?

MIRANDA
She's still in shock, but she'll be okay.

AUDREY
Vladimir, have you talked to Royd about what happened in there?

D'BRANIN
No... But I've done a little investigating and I believe this may answer a number of questions.

He places his briefcase on the table and takes out the broken pieces of Owl's cup which fell on the computer.

DARRYL
What is is?

Owl recognizes it immediately.

D'BRANIN
It's a "coffee" cup, (he sniffs it) Although it's apparently used for more... volatile liquids.

OWL
What are you saying? Are you saying I'm responsible for what happened in there?

D'BRANIN
I'm saying we all just witnessed a terrible, accident. I don't believe anyone was necessarily at fault...

Owl stares at the pieces of the cup on the table which prevent him from arguing further.

D'BRANIN (Continuing)
My feeling is that Royd is as shocked as we are about what happened. He probably fears that we blame him. I hope we can reassure him this is not the case.

He looks around to see if there are anymore protests or questions. There are none and he closes his briefcase.

D'BRANIN
I assume we all have our final preparations to complete...

LILLY
But we're returning to Avalon... aren't we?

D'Branin stares at her incredulously.

D'BRANIN
Absolutely not! We're less than 8 hours from dropping out of drive and I see no reason to return.

He rises and leaves the lounge. The dissenting members of the team look at one another, following him out in silence. Only Miranda remains. She pours herself a glass of brandy from the crystal decanter on the oval table and takes a sip.

MIRANDA
Captain... Did you hear?

The glowing form of Royd's holograph is reflected in Miranda's glass, as it materializes behind her. She turns toward him.

ROYS'S HOLO
Yes. I hear and see... everything... on my Nightflyer, Miranda. But I assumed that you already knew that.

MIRANDA
You're correct.

ROYS'S HOLO
Are you going to reassure me now?

Miranda laughs.

MIRANDA
Isn't my very presence reassuring?

She carries her glass over to the wall-sized video monitor where she stands, looking out at space.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Miranda is sitting in the couch, sipping her brandy. Royd's holograph hovers close to her.

ROYS'S HOLO
I'm pleased that at least you and Dr. D'Branin do not think I murdered Jon. You were correct that I was about to reveal my secret when... the accident occurred.

Miranda turns, looking directly up at the recessed video camera.

MIRANDA
Who are you, Captain?

ROYD'S HOLO
Your guesses were amusing, but sadly, the truth is less dramatic. I am an ordinary man.

MIRANDA
Then why all the secrecy?

CLOSE ON THE HOLOGRAPH - The eyes gleam strangely as if the specter possessed a pride of nobility.

ROYD'S HOLO
My mother was a freetrader, a notably successful one. But she disliked people. When she grew rich enough, she had the Nightflyer built to her specifications; a ship that needed no crew.

MIRANDA
What about you?

ROYD'S HOLO
After thirty years of flying alone, Mother became bored. Actually, I should not call her my mother. I am her cross-sex clone. I was bred to be her companion and lover.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - She listens to Royd calmly without any visible reaction or judgement.

ROYD'S HOLO
I was placed in an embryonic tank but she died before my birth. She had programmed the ship for such an event, however. It drifted in interstellar space for eleven years while the ships's computer raised me.

MIRANDA
And this ship replicates the conditions of your birth, doesn't it?

ROYD'S HOLO
Three moves ahead, as usual, Miranda. If mother taught me one thing, it is that my body has no natural immunities and that contact with any of you would probably kill me.

(CONTINUED)

ROYD
(Continued)
The gravity the Nightflyer is generating is for your comfort, not mine. To me it is agony... The floating chair that I am sitting in supports my weight, but the pain is still intense. So you see why I can't take on passengers too often.

MIRANDA
Why take on people at all?

ROYD'S HOLO
Unlike my mother, I enjoy company. I like to study the aliens I take on as riders.

MIRANDA
Aliens?

ROYD'S HOLO
You are all aliens to me.

There is a long silence.

MIRANDA
I understand... Royd, if I asked you to, would you agree not to watch or listen in on us... except in here? I think it would make a big difference to the others.

ROYD'S HOLO
Even if I agreed, you'd still have no way of knowing.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - Miranda can be seen in the lounge, with the holograph standing near her. We see the the rest of the ship on the other monitors.

MIRANDA
Except by trusting you.

There is a brief silence.

ROYD'S HOLO
As you wish. I will henceforth restrict myself to this room.

The silver-gloved hand picks up the lightpen. As it flashes, all the video screen go black, save for the oval monitor.

Miranda turns away from the holograph so that she is looking directly at us. The image zooms in so that her face fills the screen.

MIRANDA
I believe you.

INT. CARGO HOLD #1- NIGHT

Audrey angrily storms into the bay with Lilly following close behind.

AUDREY
What a jerk! I wonder if we have grounds for aborting the mission or at least taking over...

LILLY
Taking over? Do think you might be overreacting?

AUDREY
No! I don't! Surgical scanners's just don't short-circuit like that. Somebody had to have been controlling it.

She walks over to the main work table and Lilly follows.

LILLY
Why don't you tell D'Branin that?

AUDREY
Because he wouldn't believed me.

She takes a length of cable and begins patching it from the team's computer into one of the ship's built-in terminals.

LILLY
What are you doing?

AUDREY
I'm linking our computer with the ship's.

LILLY
I can see that. Why?

Audrey kneels down to the spot on the wall where she's going to patch in.

AUDREY
I want find out the truth about Royd. Do you want to help?

LILLY
I have a feeling Vladimir wouldn't appreciate this.

AUDREY
That's too bad. Do you want to help or not?

Lilly watches Audrey for a moment, then she reluctantly reaches for a wire cutter and a cable connector.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Miranda sits, thinking about everything Royd has told her.

MIRANDA
What really happened in there, Royd? What killed Jon? One of us? The Volcryn?

Royd is silent.

MIRANDA
Are we in danger? Am I foolish not to be afraid?

ROYD'S HOLO
I like people. Particularly you and Dr. D'Branin. You have nothing to fear. I can protect you.

MIRANDA
From what..?

Silence.

MIRANDA
What about the others, Royd? Will you protect them also?

ROYD'S HOLO
We've talked long enough. I have work to perform.

MIRANDA
I won't keep you.

She finishes her brandy and rises from the couch.

ROYD'S HOLO
Miranda...

MIRANDA
Yes...

ROYD'S HOLO
I... admire you more than anyone I've ever met...

Miranda's laugh is rich and deep.

MIRANDA
That's quite a compliment.

She moves slowly towards the holograph glowing in the air before her.

ROYD'S HOLO
I asked you not to...

But Miranda stops before passing through it. She holds out her hand. Royd's slowly rises to meet hers. Ever-so-delicately her toned, muscular flesh touches his pale radiance.

As Miranda looks into the holograph's eyes, it suddenly disappears. She stands there a moment and then leaves the lounge.

INT. CARGO BAY #1 - NIGHT

Audrey is sitting at the Nightflyer's terminal while Lilly checks the place they've patched in with her multimeter.

LILLY
That's it.

AUDREY
Maybe we could even take over the ship's flight controls.

Audrey types in a command and Lilly comes over, sitting beside her.

LILLY
Theoretically possible, but I doubt it... Let's see if we can get in first...

Audrey types in another command and the screen fills up with data.

AUDREY
Look at this...

Lilly studies the code on the screen.

LILLY
That's the data on the hardware. Forget about taking over. The Nightflyer's system is about ten times more powerful than ours...

Audrey types another command.

AUDREY
This is interesting... the life support specs.

LILLY
Mmmmmm. It looks like Royd isn't an artificial intelligence system after all.

Audrey types in another command.

AUDREY
Nothing unusual here. Any other ideas?

LILLY
You could check for nutrient tanks, cloning equipment, that sort of thing. Find Royd's life history- the trading records, if there are any.

AUDREY
That's it! The ship's log. There must be one.

As she types in a new command an alarm goes off.

AUDREY
Shit!

Then an ominous bass rumbling is heard behind them. They turn to see a huge, grey, steel panel slides across the access to the corridor.

AUDREY

What the..?

LILLY

The backup airseal.

They look at each other realizing the implications.

AUDREY

Quick!

She grabs Lilly and they run towards the door, as they do, a hideous, whistling sound can be heard, from the direction of the outer airlock.

AUDREY

Come on!

They sprint towards the inner door. The whistling noise is deafening and the vacuum is already pulling at things that aren't bolted down.

Lilly is struck by a flying cardboard box and she trips. Audrey is considerably faster than she is, and doesn't notice that Lilly is down until she's at the outer lock.

Audrey starts back in to help her, but as she does, Lilly is sucked up off the floor, and across the bay, smashing with bone breaking force, against the doors of the outer airlock. She hangs there a moment until the doors open wide enough for her to be sucked out into space.

The roaring and whistling noise drowns out her own screams as Audrey feels her feet being pulled out from under her. She grabs on to a chair, which is bolted to the floor, and pulls her way, over it, then over a desk, managing to get enough forward momentum to push herself back toward the still-closing, grey-steel door of the backup airlock. She slips through the crack at the last possible second before it clangs loudly into place.

INT. CARGO HOLD #3 - NIGHT

The sound of an explosion is heard and alarms go off all over the ship. The ship lurches so violently Miranda is thrown out of her bunk to the ground. Then just as suddenly, everything is still. Miranda gets up and presses the communicator on the wall.

MIRANDA
Royd, what's happening?

ROYD (O.S.)
I'm still trying to find out.

Miranda tries to rouse Eliza. She opens her eyes slowly, looking very stoned. Miranda gets a safety strap and secures her tightly in her bunk, then leaves the cabin.

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Miranda walks down the corridor, picking up the other members of the team as they emerge from their respective quarters.

They gather in the corridor like refugees from some natural disaster. D'Branin turns to Miranda:

D'BRANIN
What happened?

Miranda hits the call button on the communicator mounted on the wall. Royd's voice rings out through the corridor.

MIRANDA
Royd, we're missing two of our team.

ROYD (V.O.)
I'm afraid that since I've deactivated all my monitors save for the one in the lounge - at Miranda's request, - I have no way of knowing for certain where they are.

D'BRANIN
Reactivate them, goddammit!

There is a brief pause.

ROYD (V.O.)
Cargo hold #2 is badly damaged. It was breached while we were under drive. The Nightflyer's computer automatically dropped us out of drive otherwise we would've been completely torn apart by the flux.

Darryl and Audrey exchange looks.

MIRANDA
How did it happen, Captain?

As Royd answers, Audrey walks into view, looking as if she's in a state of shock. She and sits down in a corner, tucking herself into a near-fetal position.

ROYD (V.O.)
The flight log records that your colleagues had issued a command which erroneously opened the hold's loading dock. They seem to have been using the system to gain access to the Nightflyer's flight controls.

D'Branin turns to Audrey.

D'BRANIN
Is that true?

Audrey's silence answers the question.

D'BRANIN
Where's Lilly?

Audrey remains silent and D'Branin screams at her:

D'BRANIN
I'm asking you a question!

Audrey breaks down, sobbing uncontrollably and unable to speak. Miranda comes over and puts an arm around her.

D'Branin looks at her as if not knowing how to relate to her. He speaks into the communicator:

D'BRANIN
Royd, do you have any information about Lilly?

ROYD (V.O.)
It appears she is no longer on board the ship. We can only assume that she is dead.

D'BRANIN
I see.

ROYD (V.O.)
I'm hopeful that the damage to the ship is not irreparable.

CLOSE ON D'BRANIN - The shock of what just happened begins to set in on him. He just sits there in a daze. Miranda replies for him.

MIRANDA
Captain, we'll leave you to assess the damage and we'll continue this discussion in the morning.

She switches off the communicator. Owl turns to her.

OWL
You believe him, don't you?

MIRANDA
I don't know, but I do know that the other cargo hold can be opened the same way number two was. I'm moving my sleep web in to Eliza's cabin, and I suggest that the rest of you should move into the lounge.

DARRYL
I think we should take our suits out of the pod bay and keep them nearby.

MIRANDA
Good idea. Royd can't blame us for taking precautions.

OWL
BLAME US!!? For Christ's sake, ROYD ERRIS IS KILLING US!

Looking at Owl, Miranda sees no point in arguing. D'Branin mutters to himself.

D'BRANIN
We've lost the computer...

MIRANDA
Perhaps we can make do with the portables.

D'Branin nods distractedly.

D'BRANIN
I'm not about to lose them. Not after...

He looks around the room at everyone in an odd way, as if noticing them for the first time. Then he rises and walks down the corridor toward his cabin.

OWL
Them?

DARRYL
The Volcryn, obviously! You don't think he cares about losing us do you?

AUDREY
That's not true.

The others turn to look at her.

AUDREY
If we were all dead, he wouldn't have anyone to help him document his precious creatures. Believe me, that would upset him.

MIRANDA
He's as upset as the rest of us. Maybe more so...

DARRYL
What are we going to do?

MIRANDA
Under the circumstances I think it would be best to leave our captain alone. Both accident occurred when people were trying to uncover Royd's secret.

OWL
And you don't think that's just a teensy bit suspicious?

MIRANDA
Enough that I don't intend to be the next one to give it a crack... I'm going to get some sleep. I suggest the rest of you do the same.

She leaves the lounge. Darryl looks over at the communicator on the wall and then whispers to Owl:

DARRYL
Do you think he can hear us?

Owl looks at him as if he's a fool to even ask.

OWL
Let's get our suits.

He comes over and helps Audrey up. The three of them walk down the corridor. We move in close to the glowing red light on the communicator and DISSOLVE TO:

INT. D'BRANIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON ANOTHER RED COMMUNICATOR LIGHT - We move back to reveal D'Branin working at his desk as the light of false day comes up slowly in the cabin. The door opens and as Miranda enters, nearly loses her balance as the ship rolls on its axis. She presses the communicator on the wall.

MIRANDA
Royd?

ROYD (V.O.)
Yes, Miranda.

MIRANDA
How bad is it?

ROYD (O.S.)
Hold three is completely ruined. We're extremely fortunate, however, as the drive system still seem to be intact... I'm worried about our return trip. I don't know if the airseal can stand the stress of going back into drive. It could tear the ship in half.

D'BRANIN
Is there anything we can do?

ROYD (V.O.)
I can reinforce the exposed areas with some of the hull that was torn loose. It's still floating within a kilometer of the ship.

D'BRANIN
We have four pods of our own... We could retrieve the pieces.

ROYD (V.O.)
I'll have to do the actual repairs myself. But that's not my primary concern.

MIRANDA
You? But what about your muscles, your weakness... can't we help you?

ROYD (V.O.)
I'm only crippled in gravity. Weightless, I'm in my own element and I plan to kill the gravity grid shortly. If I emerge from my chambers do you think you can keep the others from killing me?

D'BRANIN
Royd, we're not criminals. How can you think that we'd try and harm you?

ROYD (V.O.)
You know they're suspicious of me. Don't give me false assurances.

MIRANDA
You would be in danger, but I think that by showing yourself you'd set them at ease. At least they could see that you told them the truth.

ROYD (V.O.)
They think I killed their friends. They're frightened.

D'BRANIN
I don't see how we can give you any guarantees.

ROYD (V.O.)
I might have prevented the accident... But you made me turn off my monitors, Miranda.

Miranda and D'Branin exchange glances.

ROYD (V.O.)
How can you protect me if I come out?

D'BRANIN
I can send the others off to retrieve the hull fragments, and Miranda can stay with you. We'll get it done three times as fast.

ROYD (V.O.)
As you will. I'm going to depower the gravity grid. Prepare your crew.

MIRANDA
One of our team is injured. I think she should remain on board to...

Royd's voice blasts through the com system:

ROYD (V.O.)
NONE OF YOUR TEAM MAY REMAIN ON BOARD! NO ONE!

The monitor crackles and then shuts off. D'Branin and Miranda look at each other then leave the cabin.

EXT. SPACE; NIGHTFLYER - NIGHT

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - dressed in her space-suit, she is waiting in her pod. Behind her, the rest of the crew are gathering hull fragments: D'Branin, with Eliza on his pod, Audrey and Darryl on a second pod. Owl is off separate from them on the third.

MIRANDA'S POV - The Nightflyer floats languidly amid the alien starscape. The smaller sphere which comprises hold #2, is shattered, but a major section portion of metal dangles from it, giving it an unbalanced look.

A circular airlock in the front of the ship, dilates, and Royd flies out. His pod is larger and of an odd design.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA - We can see the anticipation in her eyes as Royd approaches.

ANGLE ON ROYD - He glides closer to Miranda. As his pod emerges from a shadow , we can see his face... the same, yet somehow younger than his holograph. He looks frightened.

Royd and Miranda look at each other for a moment in silence.

ROYD
We have a good deal of work to do, Miranda.

MIRANDA
First, let's talk.

She maneuvers her pod close enough to his, so that they are touching.

MIRANDA
Turn off your comm. The sound will carry through the glass.

They both do so.

MIRANDA
It's okay, now...

ROYD
I don't like this Miranda. It's too obvious. This is dangerous.

MIRANDA
There's no other way. Royd, I know what's happening.

ROYD
Always three moves ahead. I knew you would.

MIRANDA
Your ship is killing us Captain. Not you. Please explain it to me.

ROYD
No. You're safer if you remain ignorant. Just do as I tell you! All of you are in danger, but I can protect you... if you let me!

EXT. OWL'S POD - NIGHT

Owl is hiding behind a large section of shattered hull. Watching Miranda and Royd, he looks convinced of their complicity. Bringing his pod around in a wide circle, he vanishes behind the ship.

EXT. ROYD AND MIRANDA'S SLEDS - NIGHT

ROYD
You understand too much already. All you need to know is that the ship is malfunctioning. You'll have to trust me.

MIRANDA
Trust is a two way bond.

ROYD
Enough! We have repairs to make. Let's see just how improved you really are.

With that, he backs his pod up and moves towards the ship.

EXT. NIGHTFLYER - DIFFERENT ANGLE

Owl brings his pod alongside the ship, and manually opens the airlock to the pod bay. He braces himself for what he knows is within.

HIS POV - As the lock dilates, a shaft of light illuminates the body of the headless telepath, still draped in the bloody sheets.

CLOSE ON THE HEADLESS TELEPATH - It floats like a grisly guardian, tethered loosely to a support beam by the door to the inner lock. Somehow, it looks natural, as if it never had a head at all.

CLOSE ON OWL - He looks away, but as if against his will, his eyes keep returning to the corpse. The lock slides all the way open and Owl rides his pod inside.

INT. NIGHTFLYER - AIRLOCK

Owl watches as the lock wedges back into place. As the chamber repressurizes, the hissing air jets cause the telepath's corpse to sway gently back and forth.

When the ready light comes on, Owl twists opens the inner lock and moves into the ship's main corridor.

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Owl slips his helmet off and glances around. Unused to the weightless, he moves clumsily through the corridor and enters the lounge.

INT. NIGHTFLYER - LOUNGE

Owl pushes himself across the room, floating above the furniture. He bangs into a chair, and bounds over the conference table to the rear of the lounge.

Reaching the bulkhead separating the lounge from Royd's cabin, Owl removes a small, laser torch from his back pack. He switches it on, and aims the thin blue beam at the bulkhead.

High up on the wall behind him, a video camera pans in his direction.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

Owl's image fills the central monitor. The image zooms in on Owl's hand until the laser torch fills the screen.

INT. LOUNGE/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Owl smiles as the laser beam begins to cut through the metal. Behind him the door to the lounge slides silently open. Owl pauses, sensing the movement in his peripheral vision.

Something cold and wet touches his face. He spins around but sees nothing. A moment later it happens again, and this time he sees it.

OWL'S POV - A cloudy blue eye which was surgically removed from Jon the telepath, is floating in the air directly in front of Owl's face.

Owl stares at it in revulsion then grabs it, throwing it across the room. Shuddering, he switches the laser back on. He is about to resume cutting when an arm grabs him around his neck and jerks him away from the wall.

The laser flies out of Owl's hand. Owl whirls round to see it grabbed by the headless corpse. It raises the laser and turns it slowly toward Owl.

ANGLE ON OWL - He screams in mortal terror.

We move up to a video camera on the opposite wall, aimed down at him.

EXT. NIGHTFLYER OUTSIDE DAMAGED AIRLOCK; - NIGHT

Working with Miranda, Royd uses his pod's cybernetic arms to weld a section of armor plating back onto the damaged hull. He checks the weld.

ROYD

Done.

Just then they hear horrible, tortured cries in their headsets.

MIRANDA

What the hell's that?

Royd's eyes go up to the ship's top sphere from which he emerged earlier.

ROYD

Mother.

EXT. NIGHTFLYER; NEW ANGLE - NIGHT

Darryl and Audrey are on the other side of the ship in their pod, towing some fragments of the hull, when they hear the cries.

DARRYL

It's Owl. Where the hell is he?

They look around and see that he's no longer with the others. Audrey grabs his arm and points to where Owl's pod is parked outside the airlock.

ANGLE ON ROYD AND MIRANDA - We can hear Audrey over the com system.

AUDREY (O.S.)

He went back in the ship. Let's go!

ROYD (O.S.)

I WARNED YOU ALL NOT TO GO BACK WITHOUT ME!

AUDREY

Right...

ANGLE ON AUDREY - She ejects the scraps of metal from off their pod and activates the rockets, shooting them back towards the Nightflyer.

EXT. D'BRANIN'S POD; FARTHER OUT FROM THE SHIP - NIGHT

D'Branin is coming back towards the ship, towing a net filled with hull fragments. Eliza, still heavily sedated, sits peacefully beside him.

HIS POV; Miranda and Royd are rising up out from the damaged hold towards where Audrey and Darryl are waiting for the lock to open.

D'BRANIN
Miranda! Where's Owl!?

We can see Miranda turning back to him.

MIRANDA (in headset)
He went back in...

The voices overlap the screams from within the ship.

D'BRANIN'S POV - We see Royd and Miranda flying back in a futile effort to intercept Darryl and Audrey.

ROYD (O.S.)
I beg you to listen! If your colleague is in the ship alone, he is dead.

AUDREY (O.S.)
How do you know? Did you kill him?

ROYD (O.S.)
NO! But I could've protected him from the same fate. Please stop!

MIRANDA (O.S.)
Audrey, we have no way of knowing what's happening in there... Don't go in!

AUDREY (O.S.)
Fuck off, Miranda!

DARRYL (O.S.)
If you want to help, Miranda, keep Royd away from his goddam controls until we can get Owl!

ROYD
Dr. D'Branin, they don't know what they're doing. Please help me!

CLOSE ON D'BRANIN - He screams to them:

D'BRANIN
AUDREY, DO NOT GO IN THE SHIP! THAT'S AN ORDER.

HIS POV - The airlock open wide enough for them to enter and Darryl and Audrey fly through. It closes again by the time, Royd and Miranda reach them.

ANGLE ON MIRANDA AND ROYD -

MIRANDA
Royd, if you go in through your lock and head for your cabin. I'll try to stop them.

We see Royd trying to activate some controls in his pod. They seem to have no effect on the lock.

ROYD
It's too late. The ship will not respond to my controls.

MIRANDA
Why not?

ROYD
Because I'm being kept outside until... until mother is done with them.

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR OF SHIP - NIGHT

Darryl and Audrey are bounding down the hall towards the lounge where the cries seem to be emanating. Darryl flips back his helmet and puts his ear to the door. The screams sound louder now.

DARRYL
God! It's awful! He's in there...

He reaches out to press the panel which opens the lounge door and Audrey grabs his arm.

AUDREY
Wait a minute! We might need a weapon. How do we know there isn't something in there with him?

DARRYL
There's one way to find out.

He slams the panel and bursts into the lounge.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Save for the light coming in from the corridor, the lounge is dark and apparently empty. Audrey hesitates, watching him from the doorway. Darryl whispers:

DARRYL
Owl... where are you?

He moves across the room, towards the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Darryl flips on the light finding himself in a room with bright red globules of blood floating all over the place. He waves his hand through an especially large globule and it disperses into hundreds of smaller bubbles.

DARRYL

Charming.

He carefully avoids the cabinet containing the food processor and open a drawer containing the kitchen implements.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Audrey hesitantly enters the room, inching her way along the wall. She passes the communicator and stops suddenly, realizing that Owl's cries are coming from the speaker grill.

AUDREY

No...

Audrey senses some movement behind her, and turns to see the corpses of the headless telepath standing in front of the wall-sized video screen.

INT. GALLEY - NIGHT

Darryl has just removed a large steak knife from a drawer when we hear Audrey scream :

AUDREY (O.S.)

DARRYL, GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE!

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The headless telepath slowly approaches Audrey.

AUDREY

DARRYL...

She bolts out of the lounge just as Darryl emerges from the kitchen holding a large steak knife. He freezes, seeing the corpse moving towards him.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Audrey frantically bounds down the hall, crashing into the walls in her panicked effort to escape. At the end of the corridor, she pounds on the panel for the air lock. It opens and she dives through.

INT. AIR LOCK - NIGHT

As the panel slides closed after her, she leans against it panting for breath. Then, feeling guilty about having abandoned Darryl, she pounds on the panel and it shoots open.

She peeks out, looking down the corridor.

HER POV: The corridor is empty and utterly still.

AUDREY
Darryl! Darryl...

After a pause, Darryl's voice comes through a speaker in the corridor.

DARRYL (O.S.)
Boy, talk about bravery in the face of death...

Audrey winces with guilt, but at the same time is relieved.

AUDREY
Hey, I told you to get out of there! Darryl... where are you?

DARRYL
I'm cleaning up after myself, unlike some people.

Audrey hesitantly steps into corridor and walks back down towards the lounge.

EXT. SPACE OUTSIDE THE DAMAGED HOLD - NIGHT

Miranda and Royd have been joined by D'Branin and Eliza's pod outside the damaged hold.

MIRANDA
Royd, you told us your mother died before you were born.

Within the pod's shield, Royd's expression is anguished.

ROYD
I have never lied to you.

MIRANDA
But you haven't told us the whole story!

D'BRANIN
Royd, we've trusted you. You must tell us why this is all happening!

Eliza moans as she breaks through her sedation.

ELIZA
It's her... ghost that's been killing us.

Royd and Miranda look at one another and then at Royd. He doesn't deny the explanation.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge is dark, save for a slash of light coming from the galley. The door to the lounge slides open and Audrey cautiously peers in whispering:

AUDREY
Darryl...

There is no response.

As Audrey starts backing away from the door, we hear Darryl's voice coming from the lounge. He sounds hurt.

DARRYL (V.O.)
Dammit... Give me a hand, will you?

Audrey starts into the room then hesitates.

AUDREY
How do I know it's you?

There is a brief silence. Then we hear groaning noises.

DARRYL
Fine! Just let me bleed to death!
Just get the hell out!

Torn by guilt and anxiety, Audrey steps into the room, and haltingly approaches the galley.

AUDREY
I'm sorry... I'm sorry!

The door to the galley suddenly opens and we see Darryl is laid out on the counter, obviously dead. The headless telepath is standing before it. It's one hand gripped around the handle of the steak knife, which is imbedded in Darryl's chest. Darryl's voice comes over the com system softly whispering:

DARRYL (O.S.)
Too late...

Audrey screams and bounds out of the room.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Hysterical and running for her life now, (as best as one can in weightlessness,) Audrey head for the pod bay through which she and Darryl entered the ship.

As she turns the corner, her helmet falls off the back her suit, but Audrey doesn't notice. She keeps on running until she reaches the Pod Bay, where she pounds on the illuminated panel on the wall. The inner lock slowly opens and she runs through.

INT. POD BAY - NIGHT

Audrey presses the panel to open the outer lock when she realizes her helmet is gone. She looks back towards the inner lock, but decides instead to head directly for her pod. She bounds over to it and is about to get in, when we hear the sound of the inner lock cycling open. Audrey quickly ducks into the pod and closes the door.

INT. POD - NIGHT

Audrey holds her breath as the torso walks past the pod and out of sight. After a pause, we hear the inner lock cycling open again. Remaining hidden, Audrey reaches up to start the pod's rocket, but as she does, the the door to pod is jerked open. She is violently pulled out by the telepath's remaining arm.

INT. POD BAY - NIGHT

In one smooth motion, the headless telepath smashes Audrey against the wall to the pod bay, breaking her neck.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - We see the headless telepath, opening the pod bay's outer airlock. It tosses Audrey's torso out into space, away from where the others could see it.

As the lock slowly closes, the image changes to a point of view outside the Nightflyer where we see the pods of Royd, Miranda, D'Branin and Eliza still hovering near the other side of the ship.

EXT. SPACE OUTSIDE NIGHTFLYER - NIGHT

Royd is continuing with his explanation.

ROYD
My mother's spirit... or whatever you chose to call it, resides in the ship's computer. It has an organic, crystal matrix core.

D'BRANIN
Esperstone?

CLOSE ON ROYD - He nods, somberly.

ROYD
Before my mother died, she transferred her consciousness into this core. She had shown signs of instability in the past, but I see now, that she's become truly mad.

MIRANDA
How is she doing it? I can understand how she can open and close an airlock, but what about Jon?

ROYD
In life, mother had tremendous powers of telekenesis. They have only become stronger...

D'BRANIN
And under weightlessness, her power would be...

ROYD
Enormous. Yes. Gravity is her one great limitation.

They turn to the open lock of the drive room.

ROYD
They are all probably dead. And knowing mother as I do, I must tell you that she could never allow you to return to Avalon alive.

Miranda and D'Branin look at one another.

D'BRANIN
What about you, Royd? Aren't you in any danger?

ROYD
If she believed I had deserted her - that I had chosen to side with you, then she would kill me too. I would have to prove my allegiance. I could kill you both, right now and win my way back into Mother's good graces.

He touches his pod's laser cannon. There is a long silence as he looks into Miranda's eyes and then atD'Branin.

MIRANDA
You could try, Captain... But I caution you, the improved model is not easy to kill.

CLOSE ON ROYD - He glances at the Nightflyer and then back at Miranda. The decision is a painful one for him. Finally, he take his hand from the pod's laser cannon.

ROYD
I would not kill you. I've lived for 39 years and I have never lived at all. If we lose, we all die together. If we win, well, I shall die anyway...

MIRANDA
Your mother lied to you, Royd! You won't die without the ship!

ROYD
No matter. Death does not frighten me.

MIRANDA
Is there any way to get back in?

Royd looks back at the ship.

ROYD
Through the drive room.

A low moan is heard over the headsets. It takes a moment for the three of them to realize that it's coming from Eliza. She begins struggling to free herself from her bonds. D'Branin and Miranda kneel down to aid her.

Beneath the faceplate, Eliza's eyes flick rapidly back and forth between Royd, Miranda and D'Branin.

D'BRANIN
Can you hear us? Are you allright?

ELIZA
The Volcryn...

D'BRANIN
Where?

She looks out into space and following her gaze, we see a faint, colored glow of light in the distance.

This revelation is interrupted by an ominous, low-pitched RUSHING noise coming from the Nightflyer.

The three others look back at the ship to see another glowing light in the direction of the Nightflyer; the glow of of the fusion rings behind the drives.

ROYD
Hurry! The ship is preparing to move!

He and Miranda start up the rockets on their pods, but D'Branin hesitates, torn between his dream, and his allegiance to what's left of his team. Miranda turns to him:

MIRANDA
I know what you're thinking. Go to to them.

D'Branin's expression answers her question.

MIRANDA
Don't worry about us.

ROYD
Dr. D'Branin, you do understand that my mother is about to move the ship. If we're unable to stop her, you'll be left behind.

D'BRANIN
I realizes that.

MIRANDA
Eliza, come with us!

Eliza shakes her head. She continues to stare out into space toward the colored glow.

Miranda and D'Branin's eyes lock for a final time.

ROYD
We have no time left.

He pulls the throttle back on his pod and heads for the open lock which leads into the drive room. Miranda starts up her pod and passes him, entering the ship first.

INT. DRIVEROOM - NIGHT

Miranda's pod is leading the way down the long barrel of the chamber when Royd pulls abreast of her, stiff and menacing in his black, bulky armor. Side by side they sail past the glowing, cylindrical stardrives.

ROYD
When we reach the inner lock, jump on to my pod

The two pods slow as they approach the inner wall of the driveroom. Miranda abandons her pod jumping on behind Royd while he reaches out to cycle open the lock. As the door open, they glide through into the lock chamber.

INT. LOCK CHAMBER - NIGHT

Royd turns back to Miranda as they proceed:

ROYD
Once the lock opens... it will begin. Most of the ship's furnishing are either built in or bolted into place but the things your crew brought on board are not. Mother will use them...

Royd lowers the pod. The grapplers make a metallic sound as they touch the chamber floor.

The inner door opens and Royd applies the thrusters.

INT. INNER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The first section of the corridor is empty and quiet.

As they reach the point where it curves off sharply, they notice a long tube of some sort, suspended in the air before them.

Royd's hands tighten on the laser weapon as they approach.

ROYD
What is..?

As the pod round the bend, the tube turns out to be a part of Darryl's lower intestinal tract.

Cut open from crotch to throat, he is suspended in midair by his guts, which have been stretched out from floor to ceiling in a grotesque parody of a spiders web.

MIRANDA
Oh, God...

ROYD
Forgive my lack of reverence, but knowing mother as I do...

He raises the grapplers and applies the thrusters and builds up speed, ramming the pod through the center of the web. They burst through, spreading a fine mist of blood into the air.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - Royd's pod is flying down the corridor which leads up to the lounge. We hear Royd yells to Miranda:

ROYD
HOLD ON!

The pod crashes into the door. The impact shatters it like cardboard and carries them through into the lounge.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The pod scrapes along the floor slamming into the conference table. Miranda is thrown to the floor. Before she can get to her feet, the headless telepath is upon her, wielding the large steak knife.

Royd fires his laser and slices the corpse into a number of smaller pieces. The arm holding the knife continues after Miranda.

Royd continues firing, slicing the hand from the arm, the fingers from the hand until the knife is left to carry on its work by itself. It slashes wildly at Miranda and stabs deeply into her shoulder, slicing through her suit.

MIRANDA
Damn!

She reaches out and grabs the knife. Examining the cut with her other hand, she sees that the wound has drawn blood. She stares at the wound and mentally stems the flow of blood.

Miranda looks up to see Owl's laser torch flying through the air towards Royd,

MIRANDA
ROYD! BEHIND YOU!

Royd turns, and the thin blue beam from the torch hits him squarely in the chest. Royd returns fire, and the pod's heavy-duty laser hits the pistol, melting it.

MIRANDA
Are you wounded?

ROYD
No. My suit is better armored than yours and her laser was a low-powered toy.

Royd activates the thrusters and moves the pod to where Owl had begun to cut into the bulkhead earlier. He switches on the pod's laser.

ROYD
We'll be through in five minutes or less.

Miranda notices some movement in her peripheral vision and turns to see a large, ornate mirror coming off the opposite wall and flying through the air towards them.

Miranda quickly picks up a chair, smashing the mirror in midair.

Almost simultaneously, the light fixture above the oval table begins swinging around, faster and faster until it breaks free and flies through the room towards them. Miranda gives it the same treatment as the mirror.

ROYD
Do you need help?

MIRANDA
Just keep on cutting. I'll try to cover you.

ROYD
I'm through.

CLOSE ON THE BULKHEAD - The laser has burned a meter square line into the metal.

Royd raises the grapplers and applies the thrusters, crashing the sled into the bulkhead.

As it breaks through, a piercing blast of sound comes over the com system. Miranda doubles over in agony as she struggles to shut sound on her headset.

Simultaneously, there is a violent explosion from within the kitchen and the paneling bursts open, lashing utensils, glasses, plates, knives, pieces of flesh and bones across the room towards Royd at ballistic speeds. An electrical outlet near Miranda shoots out a three foot long spark. Miranda manages to shield herself behind a lounge chair and the barrage bounces harmlessly off Royd's heavily armored suit.

Then time seems to slow as he steps off the sled and kneels, crawling through the opening.

Miranda sees that the remains of the corpse are gliding towards her once again. The utensils rise up off the ground and begin flying at Miranda when the whole ship suddenly lurches violently. Miranda is knocked back hard against the wall.

Everything, including the corpses falls to the floor with a loud crash. The blood, which was a mist in the air, falls to the floor like rain, forming a sticky red coating over everything. Miranda realizes that gravity has returned to the Nightflyer.

Royd's voice comes through the communicator grills around the room.

ROYD (V.O.)
I made it.

MIRANDA
I noticed.

ROYD (V.O.)
I've restored gravity with a manual override and I'm cutting off as many computer functions as possible.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN; CONTROL CONSOLE - NIGHT

Miranda's form is visible on the large monitor. We move back to reveal Royd seated at the console. He labors to speak, clearly suffering from the effects of gravity.

ROYD
We're still far from safe. She's trying to find a way around me even now, and I cannot afford to overlook anything.

In the monitor, Miranda can be seen rubbing her shoulder where she smashed into the wall.

Royd uses the lightpen to zoom in for a closer look. We see The impact has reopened the wound on Miranda's shoulder and blood is oozing out faster than before.

ROYD
Miranda, your suit has been breached. You're bleeding.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Miranda looks down and sees the blood.

MIRANDA
So I am...

ROYD
You must change into another suit immediately! I cannot guarantee how long I can keep the locks sealed.

MIRANDA
Allright.

She gets to her feet and is about to leave the lounge when she notices a glow of light on the room's wall-sized screen.

MIRANDA
Royd, look at the screen.

HER POV - The view of space shows the colored glow which D'Branin and Eliza saw earlier is getting brighter. Royd's voice comes over the com system.

ROYD (O.S.)
The Volcryn...

Miranda watches the screen a moment longer, then leaves the lounge.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT

D'Branin and Eliza's sled has moved out a great distance from the Nightflyer which is still visible behind them.

CLOSE ON D'BRANIN AND ELIZA - The glowing, colored light is absolutely brilliant. We see the Volcryn reflected in the pod's glass bubble. D'Branin smiles, opening the thrusters all the way. As they pass out of frame we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROYD'S CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE OVAL MONITOR - Royd switches from the view of space to one following Miranda. He anxiously watches her progress down the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Royd's voice rings out through the communicators built into the walls.

ROYD
When you've changed you'll have to dump the corpses into the mass conversion unit, then any other loose objects that aren't...

MIRANDA
One thing at a time, Captain.

She opens the hatch just past the drive room and enters.

INT. CARGO HOLD #2 - NIGHT

Miranda rips off her breached suit and quickly slips into a new one, repressurizing it.

MIRANDA
You were saying...

ROYD
Mother is still a threat. With the gravity returned, she can only move one object at a time but she could still circumvent me at any time.

MIRANDA
Roger.

She leaves the hold.

INT. GALLEY - NIGHT

The hum of the ship's engines is much louder in here. Miranda lifts up the remains of Jon and Darryl's corpses and dumps them into the conversion unit. The torsos and limbs twitch under her touch.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Miranda walks down the curving silver corridor. The soles of her boots click hollowly on the metal floor.

Sensing that she's being watched, she notices a video camera panning with her.

MIRANDA
Royd...

The only sound is her breathing.

She stares directly into the lens then turns away abruptly an continues down the tube.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The door to the lounge opens. Miranda hesitates in the doorway.

MIRANDA
Royd... are you allright?

Silence.

MIRANDA
Royd...

Royd's voice sounds strained as it comes through the communicator:

ROYD
One moment... Yes.

As Miranda enters the lounge, we notice the door to a small utility closet opening a crack.

POV FROM UTILITY CLOSET - We see Miranda standing quietly watching and listening for any signs of movement.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - She resumes gathering up the last of the loose scrap materials and places them inside a bag.

Behind her, we see a knife rise silently up off the carpet. It begins moving towards her and swiftly building up speed.

Miranda senses the movement and whirls round, grabbing it a few inches from her face.

She is about to places it in the bag with the other scraps when Owl suddenly falls out of the utility closet, falling on her.

Miranda screams. She is about to stab him with the knife when she realizes that he's not moving any more. She turns him over and we see where the laser has cut his throat.

MIRANDA

Oh, God...

Miranda closes her eyes and starts to cry.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Miranda close the door to the mass conversion unit and is about to leave the room when she notices Eliza's abandoned medical kit. She picks it up and walks out to the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The ship jolts violently and Miranda is thrown to the ground. Royd's voice cries can be heard crying out in pain over the com system.

Miranda's features contort as she is subjected to a tremendous increase in gravitational force.

INT. CORRIDOR; NIGHTFLYER - NIGHT

Miranda manages to switch on her suit's com system.

MIRANDA
Royd, are you there? What's happening?

Royd's voice come out painfully slowly:

ROYD (V.O.)
... she tricked me... hurts... to talk.

MIRANDA
Royd...

ROYD (V.O.)
She... teked... dial... up... two... gees... three... higher... right here... on... the... board... all... I... have to... to do... turn it... back... let me...

Silence.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN; CONTROL CONSOLE - NIGHT

Royd's hand attempts to reach out for the dial on the board but is unable to do so. Miranda's prone form is visible on one of the small monitors.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

ROYD (V.O.)
...Can't...

Miranda looks up at the camera mounted near the ceiling.

MIRANDA
Why? Why would she turn up the... gravity? It weakens her even more than you...

ROYD (V.O.)
...Yes... but... in a minute... my heart... will burst... and then... you alone... she ... will... kill gravity... kill you...

Miranda reaches out and begins dragging herself down the corridor with Eliza's medical kit under her arm.

MIRANDA
Royd... hold on...

She opens the medical kit and searches through it locating a crimson colored ampule.

CLOSE ON THE AMPULE - It is labeled Esperon.

Miranda takes it out of the bag.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN; CONTROL CONSOLE - NIGHT

With no intervention from Royd, Miranda's image is switched to the central monitor.

MIRANDA (V.O.)
Royd... Your mother...

INT. CORRIDOR; NIGHTFLYER - NIGHT

Miranda is still lying on the floor struggling under the heavy gravitational force. She fills the injection gun with the esperon.

MIRANDA
... Could she move anything... teke it... in this high gravity..?

ROYD (O.S.)
... possible... if she concentrated all her power... why?

MIRANDA
Because... ... someone... something is cycling open the airlock.

Down the corridor, we hear the bass rumbling of the lock as it slides open.

Miranda fills the injection gun with the ampule of Esperon.

Behind her the inner lock begins whistling as the air in the corridor rushes out through it.

As the lock opens further, the noise builds up to a roar. Miranda uses all of her strength and succeeds in filling the injection gun. She presses it against a vein in her neck and squeezes the trigger. It makes a loud "hiss" as the drug floods her system.

The injection gun drops to the floor, and is sucked down the corridor. Next comes the medical kit, and Miranda finds herself being pulled along with it.

Then the drug takes effect and Miranda screams, pulling herself into a fetal position.

CLOSE ON MIRANDA - Her eyes go up into her head.

DISSOLVE TO:

MIRANDA'S MIND'S EYE POV: THE BULKHEAD IN THE LOUNGE - The wall seems to literally melt away, revealing the interior of Royd's cabin. He can be seen slumped over the console, breathing heavily. His hand rests near the control for the gravity grid.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Miranda's body twitches reflexively as she concentrates.

HER MIND'S EYE POV: The lever for the gravity grid moves slowly back down to the normal range.

BACK TO SCENE - With the gravity back to normal, Miranda reaches up to the railing and pulls herself to her feet. Holding tight to the railing, she hurries over to the switch on the wall, controlling the airlock. She hits it and the lock closes.

INT. LOUNGE/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Miranda walks across the lounge towards the hole in the far wall which leads into Royd's cabin. She crawls through.

INT. ROYD'S CABIN; - NIGHT

Miranda enters and finds Royd is still sprawled over the control panel. She pulls him back into his seat and sees that he's still breathing.

Her attention is taken by the lights blazing through the large oval monitor.

HER POV; CLOSE ON THE SCREEN - The Volcryn fill the entire field of view, as they move toward the ship. Delicate, diaphanous, it appears as a vast, intricate kind of spiderwebbed craft, alive with it's own lights. It moves, with long, tendril-like veils which ripple like a cosmic Man 'o War.

Miranda watches the screen for a moment, then quickly searches the control console, until she finds the intricately carved lightpen. She aims it at one of the icons and flashes it.

A portion of bulkhead separating Royd's cabin from the lounge swings silently open. She lifts Royd into her arms and carries him out of the cabin.

INT. CORRIDOR APPROACHING POD BAY - NIGHT

Miranda hears a rumbling noise and looks behind her to see the walls and the ceiling are beginning to collapse in around her.

She runs down the hall, toward the pod bay, staying only steps ahead of being crushed.

She presses the switch for the bay but nothing happens.

Miranda closes her eyes and concentrates on the inner airlock.

CLOSE ON THE AIRLOCK - It literally bursts open as if equipped with explosive bolts.

Miranda carries Royd through just as the entire corridor collapses in on itself.

INT. POD BAY - NIGHT

Miranda carries Royd over to one of the escape pods and opens the door. Just as she is about to lift him in, she is startled by a voice from behind her.

MOTHER (O.S.)
You'll die, Royd.

Miranda turns around to see the pale, ghost-like figure of Royd's mother floating in the air, behind them.

CLOSE ON THE MOTHER - She is Royd's identical female counterpart.

ROYD
I'm sorry, Mother.

The Mother screams as Miranda helps him into the pod and closes the door.

INT. POD - NIGHT

The walls of the pod bay begin to collapse as Miranda remotely activates the controls which open the outer airlock.

Royd's mother's screams can be heard over the pod's intercom as Miranda ignites the thrusters, sending the vehicle crashing out through the airlock before it is even half-way open.

CLOSE ON ROYD - He turns back to look at the ship through the window.

HIS POV - The ghost of Royd's mother can be seen standing in the gaping airlock, watching them leave.

EXT. SPACE OUTSIDE NIGHTFLYER

The pod gets several hundred meters away when the Volcryn sweeps over the Nightflyer, absorbing it completely.

INT. POD - NIGHT

Miranda watches Royd as he views the destruction of the ship through the window.

FADE TO:

EXT. SPACE APPROACHING AVALON - NIGHT

The pod is moving slowly through space, down toward a familiar-looking, pale-blue satellite.

INT. POD - NIGHT

Royd and Miranda are concentrating intently on a holographic chess board which floats between them. He looks stronger and in better health than when he left the ship.

His rook takes Miranda's castle and it disappears from the board.

MIRANDA
You're getting better, Royd.

ROYD
I think you're just getting tired of winning.

Miranda laughs, taking his rook with her queen.

MIRANDA
Check.

He moves a pawn beside her queen.

ROYD
Checkmate.

Miranda stares incredulously.

ROYD
It's what happens when you study with an improved model.

Miranda studies the board, still not believing that he's actually beaten her. She turns to him and smiles.

MIRANDA
Well, I don't want you to think I'm only a good winner... but we have one more game game to play.

She types a command which causes the chess set to disappear.

ROYD
I don't understand.

MIRANDA
I'll explain it to you.

She puts her arms around Royd and kisses him. They separate and he looks into her eyes.

ROYD
And they thought I was an artificial Intelligence...

He returns the kiss.

EXT. POD - NIGHT

The pod drifts slowly down toward the pale blue satellite.

FADE OUT: